

THE SHOOTERS ALLIANCE FOR FIREARMS RIGHTS
MICHIGAN GUN OWNERS

STATEMENT OF POSITION REGARDING

HOUSE BILL 5474

The Shooters Alliance for Firearm Rights and Michigan Gun Owners, representing a combined membership of over one thousand hunters, sport shooters, gun collectors, firearms dealers, and otherwise law-abiding firearms owners throughout the state of Michigan, actively support House Bill 5474 and encourage the Legislature to pass it as is, and forward it to the Governor for her signature.

Michigan's firearms preemption law prohibits local units of government – cities, villages, counties, and townships – from enacting restrictions on the purchase, possession, and carrying of firearms that are different than or stricter than those imposed by state law. This is a crucial part of the freedoms enjoyed by Michigan residents, who may travel freely within the state, secure in the knowledge that as long as they remain in compliance with the firearms laws of the State of Michigan, they do not risk running afoul of some obscure local firearms regulation that no one may ever have heard of. Local units of government are permitted to restrict, or even prohibit, the discharge of firearms within their borders.

House Bill 5474 would add colleges and universities to the list of entities so restricted. Currently, Michigan law prohibits concealed pistol holders from carrying a concealed pistol into the dormitory or classroom of any college or university. However, many colleges and universities prohibit virtually all firearms possession on their premises. The University of Michigan, through means that still escape understanding, makes such possession a misdemeanor, and threatens otherwise lawful firearms owners with arrest, jail, criminal records, and fines, for even having a lawfully owned firearm locked in the car, if that car is parked in a University-owned parking structure.

Through over eight years that Michigan has had a “shall issue” concealed pistol licensing scheme, concealed pistol licensees have established that they commit fewer offenses per capita than does the general population. They have established that the possession of pistols by law-abiding citizens does not represent a threat to the safety of themselves, or others. In fact, reports of licensees acting to defend themselves or others threatened by criminals continue appear in police reports and in the news media.

Some people may equate the right to lawfully carry firearms onto college campuses with the 2007 massacre of 32 students at Virginia Tech University. However, it should be noted that the only person violating the law that day was the perpetrator of that outrage, who should not have been able to purchase a pistol, and under Michigan concealed pistol law, would not have been able to obtain a license. Had even one other person within the vicinity of the perpetrator been armed, it is very likely that the death toll would not have been nearly as high as it was. As evidence of this contention, one need only examine the 2002 shooting that occurred on the campus of the Appalachian School of Law in Grundy, Virginia. There, a crazed perpetrator killed three teachers and students, and injured three more, before he was subdued by armed fellow students. Those students had to run from the scene of the shooting to their cars, where they kept privately owned and lawfully stored firearms, then returned to stop the perpetrator. He surrendered when confronted by his armed classmates, and was eventually convicted of murder.

The United States Supreme Court has determined that the right to possess firearms is an individual right, guaranteed by the Second Amendment to the United States Constitution. Michigan colleges and universities, just like Michigan’s cities, townships, counties, and villages, should be compelled to recognize that restricting the rights of law-abiding citizens does not improve their security nor prevent criminals from victimizing members of their communities. Instead, such restrictions given free reign to criminals, by creating zones where they know that law-abiding citizens are unarmed. This body should start the process of preventing Michigan’s colleges and universities

from creating such zones, and should compel them to respect the rights of the law-abiding among us. SAFR and MGO request that this Committee vote to approve HB 5474, and forward it to the House for consideration and approval.